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TRUMP WINS ACQUITTAL

Senate clears Trump of impeachment charges, ending only the third presidential trial in U.S. history.

SUSAN WALSH AP

SPORTS

Charlotte 49ers' Brice Williams carries on his father's legacy 1B

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Heavy rain, storms 68°/51° See 2A

The Charlotte Observer

CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM

CMS faces scrutiny over changes to plans for new high schools

BY FRED CLASEN-KELLY AND ANNIE MA
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Less than three years ago, voters overwhelmingly approved the biggest school bond package in Mecklenburg County history — nearly $1 billion to build new classrooms, repair old buildings and relieve overcrowding.

But documents show that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools administrators last year scaled back plans or delayed construction of the three most expensive projects.

Following questions from the Observer, district leaders began investigating whether administrators ordered the changes involving hundreds of millions of dollars without telling the public and school board members and county commissioners, who are charged with overseeing how the money is spent.

District officials also were confronted last week when a volunteer on the district's bond oversight committee noticed discrepancies in monthly reports that CMS publishes and raised questions about what happened.

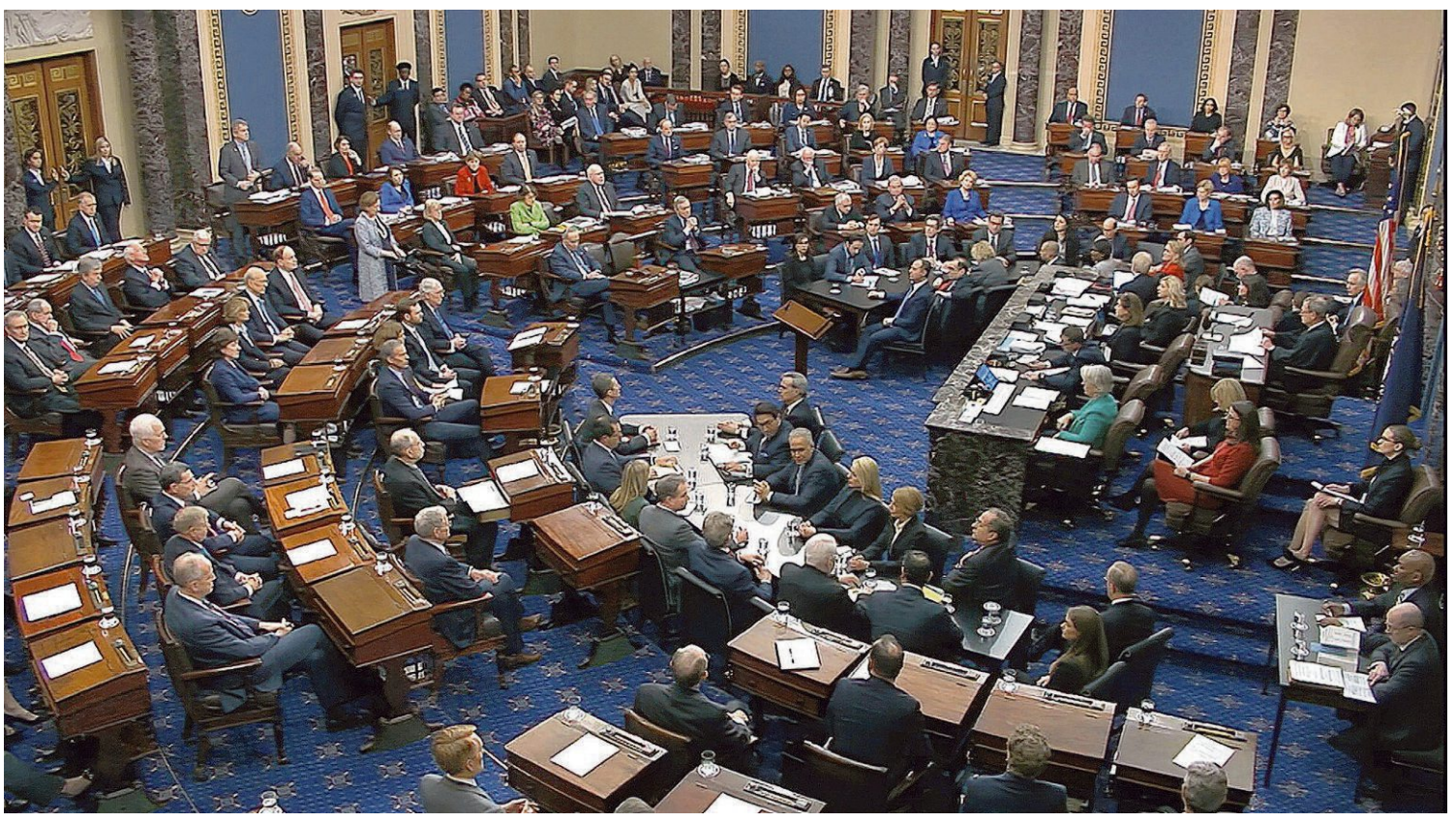
IN 2017 VOTERS GAVE COUNTY OFFICIALS PERMISSION TO BORROW MONEY TO BUILD 10 SCHOOLS, REPLACE THE BUILDINGS OF SEVEN EXISTING ONES AND COVER ADDITIONS AND RENOVATIONS AT 12 SCHOOLS.

In 2017, the district pledged to spend $330 million — about one-third of the entire bond issue — to build three new high schools. The buildings would have 125 classrooms each, the district said.

But monthly bond reports, which provide updates to the projects and are compiled by the company overseeing the construction, LeChase Jacobs, say that CMS downsized high schools in west Charlotte and the Steele Creek area in southwest Charlotte to 100 classrooms.

CMS also has delayed a new high school planned for south Charlotte, the reports say, even

SEE SCHOOL BOND, 10A



AP

Senators vote on the first article of impeachment during the trial of President Donald Trump, who was charged with abusing his power by pressuring Ukraine to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden and with obstructing Congress. Trump was acquitted on both charges.

IMPEACHMENT TRIAL

Senate acquits Trump

BY LISA MASCARO AND MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

President Donald Trump won impeachment acquittal Wednesday in the U.S. Senate, bringing to a close only the third presidential trial in American history with votes that split the country, tested civic norms and fed the tumultuous 2020 race for the White House.

With Chief Justice John Roberts presiding, senators sworn to do "impartial justice" stood at their desks to state their votes for the roll call – "guilty" or "not guilty" – in a swift tally almost exclusively along party lines. Visitors, including the president's allies, watched from the crowded gallery. Roberts read the declaration that Trump "be, and is hereby, acquitted of the charges."

YURI GRIPAS TNS

President Donald Trump was acquitted on both articles of impeachment.

The outcome followed months of remarkable impeachment proceedings, from Speaker Nancy Pelosi's House to Mitch McConnell's Senate, reflecting the nation's unrelenting partisan divide three years into the Trump presidency.

What started as Trump's request for Ukraine to "do us a favor" spun into a far-reaching, 28,000-page report compiled by House investigators accusing an American president of engaging in shadow diplomacy that threatened U.S. foreign relations for personal, political gain as he pressured the ally to investigate Democratic rival Joe Biden ahead of the next election.

No president has ever been removed by the Senate.

A politically emboldened Trump has eagerly predicted vindication, deploying the verdict as a political anthem in his reelection bid. The president claims he did nothing wrong, decrying the "witch hunt" and "hoax" as extensions of special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian 2016 campaign interference by those out to get him from the start of his presidency.

Trump's political campaign tweeted videos, statements and

SEE TRIAL, 7A

Video shows police reuniting NC woman with stolen puppy

BY JOE MARUSAK
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When she twice lost her seasonal Amazon warehouse job and had to live in her car last year, Angel Reid said a devoted family member was always by her side: her puppy, Ruby.

The brown dachshund-Jack Russell mix never stopped smiling and wagging her tail.

While homeless, Reid would let Ruby out of the car at dog parks in Houston, Texas, where they lived before moving to Charlotte. Ruby would run and jump and play — always lifting the 22-year-old Reid's mood.

"She's my daughter," Reid told The Charlotte Observer on Wednesday. "She gave me the inspiration to keep going ... She definitely kept me sane."

But on Saturday night, Reid thought she'd lost the 8-

SEE STOLEN PUPPY, 2A

Courtesy of Angel Reid

Angel Reid was reunited with her puppy, Ruby.

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